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DRYING FOODS:

FRUITS

Dry only high quality fruits and vegetables that are fully ripened. Drying does not improve flavor of raw or unripened foods. If fruits are under-ripe, they will taste under-ripe when dried. Wash well to remove dirt and insect larvae. Prepare fruit to dry by peeling (if desired) and slicing, coring and pitting. Fruits to be sliced should be cut evenly into 1/8 to 1/4th. inch slices. Wedges take longer to dry than even slices. Be sure to bulge apricot halves inside out, exposing the meaty inside of the fruit upwards--allowing the air access into the fruit. Pit cherries, halve, and pit prunes. Wash and dry seedless grapes on stems for old fashioned raisins. Remove from stems when leathery. Grapes may be dipped in boiling water to crack the skins and shorten drying time, produces golden raisins. You can also cut grapes in half, turning the open side upwards on the trays.

Apples, apricots, peaches, and pears can be pre-treated to slow oxidation and browning. However, you can dry apple slices with no additives except a sprinkle of cinnamon and they dry perfectly indoors or outdoors. If these fruits are not pre-treated, they tend to discolor, losing much of their appetite appeal. The most effective and most natural way, which I prefer, is that of dipping into lemon or lime juice. These methods can be used on apples, pears, peaches and bananas. Apricots look best when sulfured to retain their chewy texture and attractive orange color. Current research shows that both sulfuring and sulfating have no harmful effect on the body. The sulfur dioxide tends to evaporate during drying, leaving only a trace on the dried fruit. Much lower concentrations are used in home drying than in commercially dried fruits, so you will experience less change in flavor.

Sulfating Fruits: Food grade sodium bisulfite is available from wine making supply stores, drug stores, or chemical supply companies. Dissolve 1 to 2 tablespoons of sodium bisulfate in 1 gallon water. Soak fruit slices 5 to 10 minutes. Gently rinse under cold running water. (using a simple garbage bag and cutting a breather hole at the top (photo below).

Sulfuring Fruits: Sulfuring is a simple process once your equipment is assembled. Pure sulfur is burned in a closed box containing the cut fruit. Sulfur dioxide fumes surround the



fruit and penetrate the surface, slowing oxidation during drying. Sulfuring must be done outside and care must be taken not to inhale sulfur dioxide fumes. Simple instructions for sulfuring fruit are available from your local county Extension Service or in HOW TO DRY FOODS by Deanna DeLong (H.P. Books). It is possible to hang the Food PANtrie outside with your fruit inside, cover it to retain the sulfur fumes and allow the fumes to filter up through the fruit and out through the top vent of the Food PANtrie while the fruit is in the dryer. This system has also been used for smoking fish and meats.



This system can also be used for preserving your foods by smoking.

Other fruit pre-treatments: If you choose not to sulfur or sulfite apples, apricots, peaches or pears, you can dip them in a fruit juice or fruit juice concentrate. Another option is to syrup blanch by simmering fruit in a syrup of fruit juice or water and sugar (1 cup sugar to 2 cups liquid) for 5 to 10 minutes. Allow fruit to soak in liquid another 30 to 40 minutes, drain and lightly rinse. Fruit pre-treated in this manner will take longer to dry, are sweeter, stickier and have a slightly different color and flavor than those pre-treated with sulfur dioxide or by sulfating.

Dryness Test: All fruit should be pliable and leather with no pockets of moisture.

Conditioning Fruits: Condition the fruit by allowing it to stand in a closed glass or plastic container for several days to allow residual moisture to distribute evenly through all the pieces of fruit. If you notice moisture on the lid, return to the trays and dry some more.

Pasteurizing Fruit: Pasteurize fruits by packaging them in air tight plastic freezer bags, squeezing out all excess air. Place in the freezer for at least 48 hours. This will destroy any insect larva which could hatch during storage. However, freezing will also kill all living enzymes in the foods producing dead food. Taste nice, but loses all enzyme values.

Storing Fruits: Store fruits in freezer bags inside the airtight plastic, metal or glass containers. Keep the containers of dried fruit cool, dry and dark. Temperature is really important! The cooler the storage temperature, the longer dried foods will keep and maintain good taste and nutrition.

Fruit Leather: Fruit leathers are chewy rolls of natural fruits that have been pureed and dried. Cover each tray with a plastic kitchen wrap, taping the sides down with masking tape. Or better yet, use a heavy food-safe plastic, cut to fit the trays. Lightly spray with a vegetable spray to eliminate sticking. Puree is very tart. Sweeten it by adding a small amount of honey or white corn syrup. For fresh fruits that turn dark (apples, pears, peaches or apricots), heat puree to almost boiling, or add 1/16 teaspoon sodium bisulfite to 1 quart of puree. Pour puree into a clean watering container with a long spout.

Then pour 1/8 to 1/4th. inch thick on the trays. Dry until it can be rolled and is not sticky to touch. Wrap securely in new plastic wrap, then store in airtight plastic or metal containers in a cool, dry, dark place.

VEGETABLES

Chile peppers, lentils, shell beans, soybeans, garlic, onions and peppers must be washed, sliced or diced if necessary, before drying. Peas, celery and corn must be steam blanched (steamed until they are heated all the way through, but not cooked enough to eat).

Dry all vegetables until they are brittle with no trace of moisture. Package in airtight freezer bags and store according to directions for *FRUITS*.



HERBS

For the best flavor, harvest the leaves of most herbs before the plant has begun to flower. Gather early in the day, before the sun weakens the flavoring oils. Rinse stems and leaves gently with cold water and shake. Discard any withered or discolored leaves. Cover trays with a thin layer of herbs.

Hang the Food PANtrie in a well ventilated, shady area. Do not hang in direct sunlight because the herbs will lose too much flavor.

JERKY

Jerky can be dried just by hanging the Food PANtrie in your home, provided it is dry enough. Use only fresh, quality lean meats or fish.

Meat or fish high in fat does not make suitable jerky. Cut 1/8 inch thick (freezing first helps you to slice it thin, or have the butcher slice it for you). Place slices of meat or fish flat on the black drying trays while inside the white bottom dish, sprinkle both sides generously with



salt and pepper to taste. Use about 1 and 1/2 teaspoon salt per pound of fresh meat or fish. Sprinkle with any other desired seasonings such as liquid smoke, Worcestershire sauce, soy sauce, garlic powder, onion powder, etc. If you choose you may layer seasoned slices in a covered glass container and marinate overnight in the refrigerator. Early in the day, place the slices on the black trays, allowing space between each piece. Hang the Food PANtrie in a warm dry place where there is plenty of air circulation. The warmer the location, the more rapid the drying. Depending on the seasons, the normal drying time should be a 24-48 hours. When the jerky cracks or breaks as it is bent, it is ready to eat or to store. It can be placed in a paper bag for further drying to free up the dryer trays for additional drying. The dryer it is, the longer the shelf life.



HOT SOY JERKY RECIPE: (a sample)

Go to the Oriental section of your grocery store and get a bottle of Hot Soy Sauce. Make sure you have some garlic powder and some salt at home. Have the butcher pick you out a nice rare rump roast with little or no fat. Have them slice it into 1/8 to 1/4th. inch slices. Cut your beef slices into pieces about 2 to 2 1/2 inches wide and about 6 to 10 inches long. Soak them in the Hot Soy Sauce for as long as you can (at least a couple hours for best flavor). Lay the slices on the black Food PANtrie trays while the black trays are in the white Food PANtrie dish to ketch all the drips. As you are filling the black trays you can stager them and stack the trays filled with slices until your ready to place them all in the drier/s. Be careful not to over lay the strips. Now sprinkle the dry seasonings including salt to taste on the top side of the strips on top tray. Now place the first tray in the top shelf of a Food PANtrie. Follow the process until the dryer is full of trays. Now quickly rinse the white Food PANtrie dish and place is under all the trays, but inside the netting and sip the Food PANtrie closed.



For faster results make sure the Food PANtrie or Food PANtries are hung from a hook near the ceiling. Heat rises and usually the jerky is ready overnight. If you use a wood stove for heat, you'll be amazed how fast the jerky is ready. You'll drive the family, friends and neighbors crazy with this jerky. If the Hot Soy Sauce is too hot for you, just use regular Soy Sauce.

Loading the Food PANtrie

Place prepared foods on trays of the Food PANtrie in a single layer, not overlapping. Hang the Food PANtrie (if in your home) near the ceiling, near to your sink. In this way it's quick and easy to prepare food, load the trays and insert the trays into the Food PANtrie. Easy to unload foods, and quick and easy cleanup of the trays. You'll use it more if it's near and convenient.

Other choices could be near a window, on the patio, even hang them on your clothes line, even the lower branches of your fruit trees.

The Food PANtrie has been designed to take on extended camping and fishing trips. Fillet the fish, season them and place them on the trays and dry them at the campsite. Use it as a camp cupboard, store your normal kitchen items away from the squirrels, bugs and birds, even a camp cooler.

The Food PANtrie makes an excellent smoker. Wrap plastic around the hanging Food PANtrie, tape it to the top and smoke the trays from below allowing the smoke to exit through the breather at the top of the Food PANtrie.